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A-Chem
Chicago, IL
176566



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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE REMOVAL AND PREVENTION
EPA CONTRACT 68-01-6669

Mr. Briand Wu, Acting Unit Chief
Emergency Response Section
Western Response Unit
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
11th Floor
230 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604

August 22, 1986

TAT-05-F-01001

Re: A-Chemical Company Emergency Response
Chicago, Illinois
TDD# 5-8606-03

Dear Mr. Wu:

On June 4, 1986, the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) was tasked by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to assist On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Verneta Simon in performing a follow-up inspection necessitated by a smoldering drum fire on June 2, 1986, at the A-Chemical Company located at 1326 North Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois (Figure 1).

A-Chemical Company is bordered on the north by Humboldt Park residential apartments, on the west by an alley with garages, on the south by a tavern and apartment complex, and on the east by North Western Avenue (Figure 2). Prior to the June 4, 1986, inspection, OSC Briand Wu and TAT members Kurt Schultz and Scott Springer, responded to the initial fire at the A-Chemical Company on January 26, 1986. On that date, drummed material was visually identified and the open entrances secured with boards by the responsible party. Also on January 26, 1986, the Emergency Response Contractor Services' (ERCS) subcontractor O.H. Materials (OHM) was contracted to remove off-site contaminated debris and run-off. A front-end loader and operator was supplied by the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation for this purpose. In addition, a high pressure hose, which was used to melt the contaminated snow and ice from the fire-fighting activities, was loaned by the Chicago Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Team to the subcontractor. The effluent was discharged into the sanitary sewer system for treatment and disposal by the Chicago Metropolitan Sanitary District.

Roy F. Weston, Inc.

SPILL PREVENTION & EMERGENCY RESPONSE DIVISION

In Association with Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., Tetra Tech, Inc., and ICF Incorporated

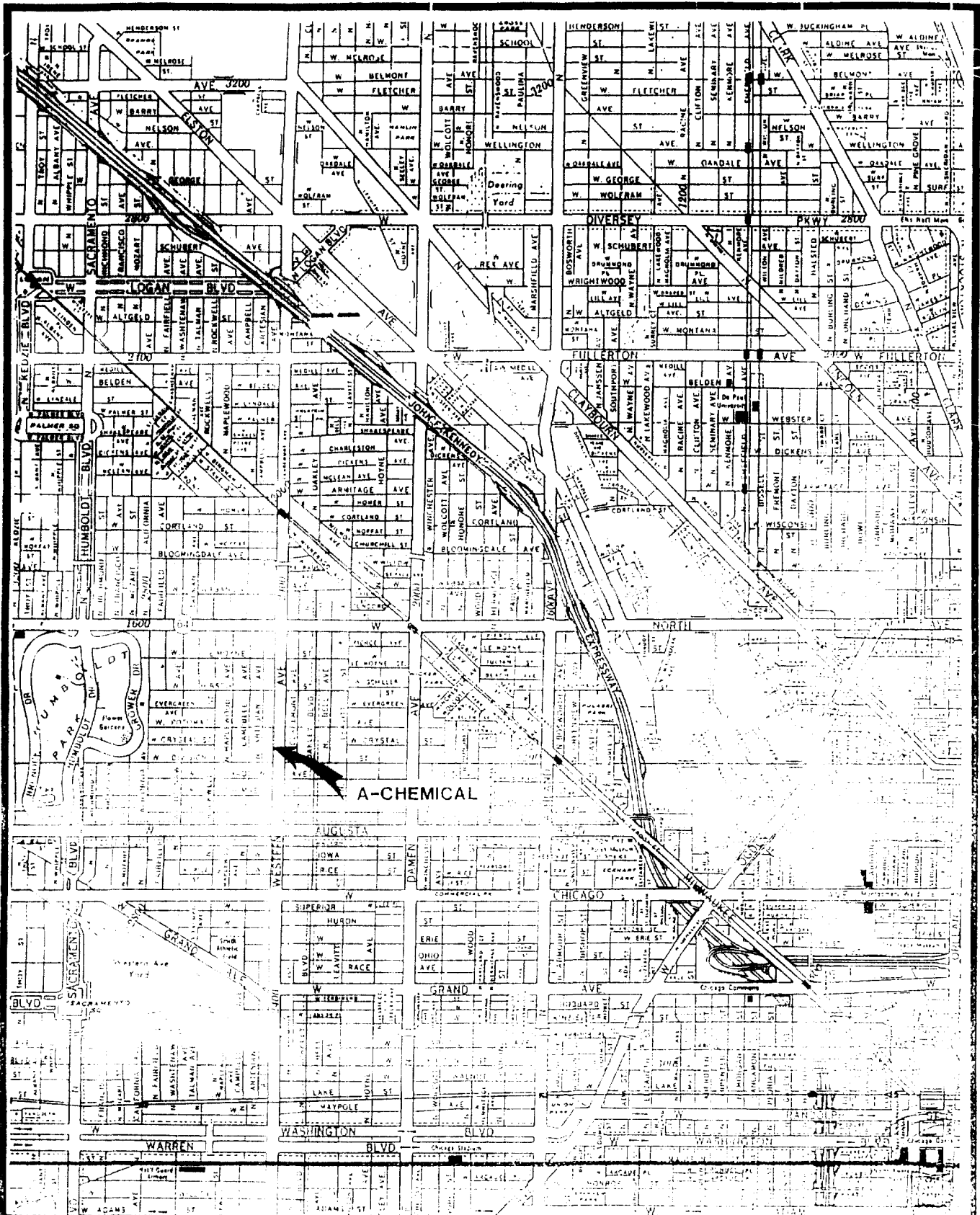


FIGURE 1
SITE LOCATION MAP
A-CHEMICAL FACTORY FIRE
CHICAGO, IL

SCALE: 1"=0.3MI.

MAP ADAPTED FROM AAA

WESTON
ENGINEERS & ARCHITECTS

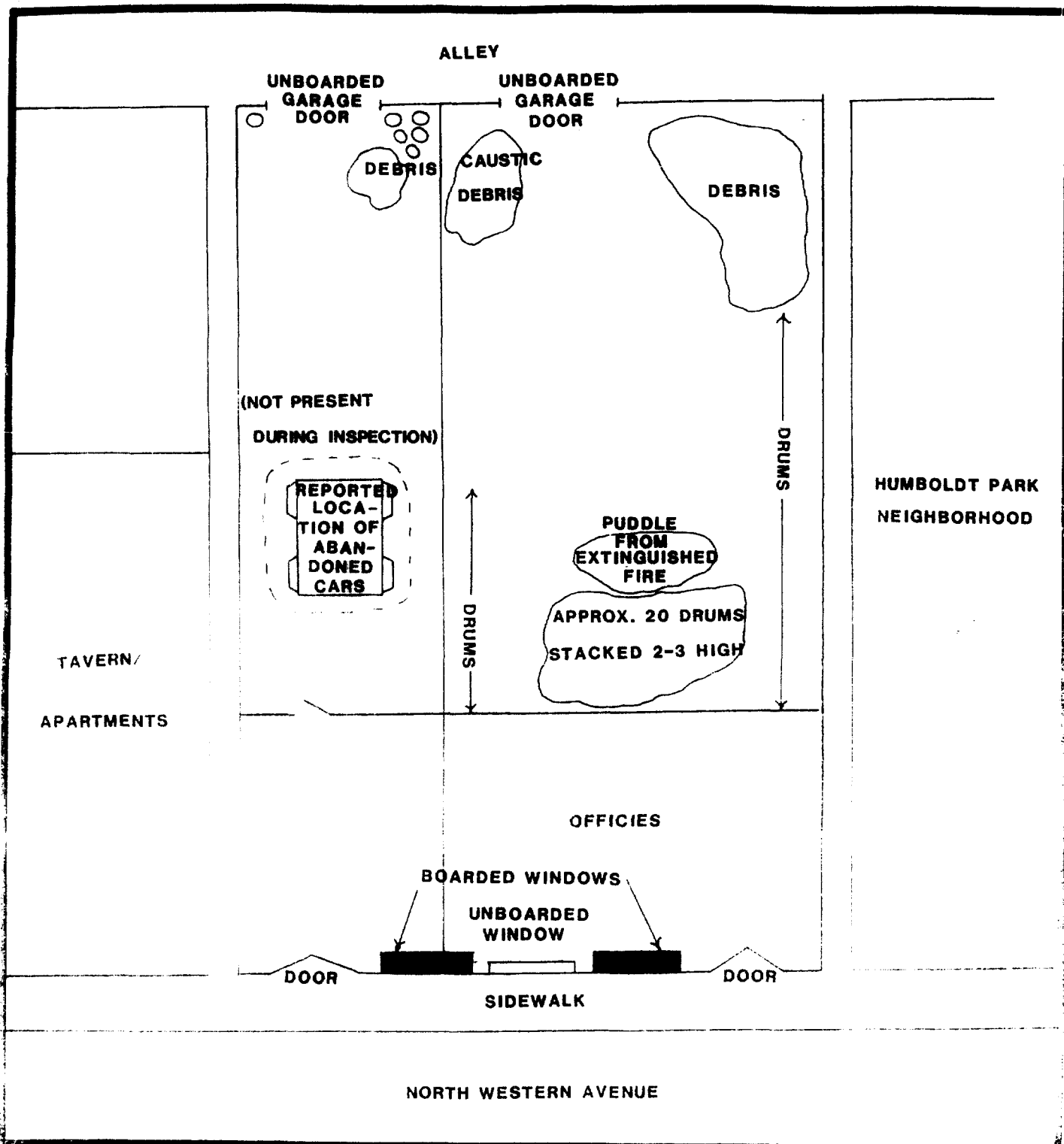


FIGURE 2
SITE MAP

A- CHEMICAL COMPANY
CHICAGO, IL.

0' SCALE (FEET) 20'

WESTON

This immediate site stabilization was completed on February 1, 1986. Since February 1, 1986, the owner of the facility, Mr. John O. Pauga, has died and the title of the property was transferred to the Illinois Development Corporation (IDC).

Throughout the spring of 1986, fires were reported in the area surrounding the A-Chemical site. The owner of the tavern south of the A-Chemical building, Mrs. Josephine Zelek, also notified the Chicago Police Department of automobiles being stored inside the burned-out building. After verifying that the cars were stolen, the police department had them removed from the south storage area (Figure 2) a few days before the drum fire. Mrs. Zelek, at approximately 1700 hours on June 4, 1986, was the first to alert the Chicago Fire Department of the fire.

At 0830 hours on June 4, 1986, the U.S. EPA contacted the TAT to respond to the A-Chemical Company fire. TAT members Kurt Schultz, William Scoville and Karl von Heimburg left the TAT office by 0930 hours to pick up OSC Verneta Simon, and at 1050 the response crew arrived at the site. Following a perimeter survey, it was determined that the building was structurally unsound and therefore unsafe to enter. A HNU survey detected 2 ppm organic vapors above background. Photographs were taken of the site at this time (Attachment A).

Based on the site inspection, it was apparent that the responsible party, IDC, had not acted to remove the materials remaining after the January 26, fire nor had they maintained site security. Access could be gained to the chemically hazardous building through unboarded windows and doors along Western Avenue as well as through open garage doors along the alley. It was apparent that the drums and other debris probably had not been moved since the ERCS subcontractor left the site on February 1, 1986.

In an attempt to secure the site following the June 2, 1986, fire, the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation cordoned off the area with barricades and caution tape. When TAT member Scoville returned to the site on June 7, 1986, the barricades had been stolen and the tape removed. In addition, heavy rains created hazardous run-off from the site onto Western Avenue. A large puddle was present on the sidewalk when TAT member Scoville arrived at the site at approximately 2200 hours.

Based on the site inspection, the TAT determined that maintaining site security was not possible since the restricting materials were often stolen. The absence of site security presents several threats to human health and the environment. Thus, removal actions may be justified by the following criteria listed in 40 CFR, Part 300.65:

- 1) "Actual or potential exposure to hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants by nearby populations, animals or food chain;"
- 2) "Hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants in drums, barrels, tanks, or other bulk storage containers, that may pose a threat of release;"
- 3) "Weather conditions that may cause hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants to migrate or be released;" and
- 4) "Threat of fire or explosion."

Since access to the building was possible, animals and humans could be exposed to the chemicals stored in the drums and the caustic materials piled on the ground. These hazardous materials may be released as a gas by further fires or released with water from rain or fire hoses. TAT member Scoville saw evidence of a chemical release in rain water on June 7, 1986. Fires have been documented at the site on both January 26, 1986, and June 4, 1986.

Recommendations for action taken at the A-Chemical site are to turn the site over to CERCLA Enforcement if the responsible party, Illinois Development, does not take the necessary action to clean up and secure the site.



Mr. Briand Wu

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August 22, 1986

If you have any questions or require additional information,
please do not hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,

ROY F. WESTON, INC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karl von Heimbürg".

Karl von Heimbürg
Environmental Technician

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Scott D. Springer".

Scott D. Springer
Technical Assistance Team
Leader, Region V

KvH:amp

Enclosure

ATTACHMENT A

PHOTOGRAPHS



1. A view of the A-Chem facility along the busy North Western Avenue, looking west.



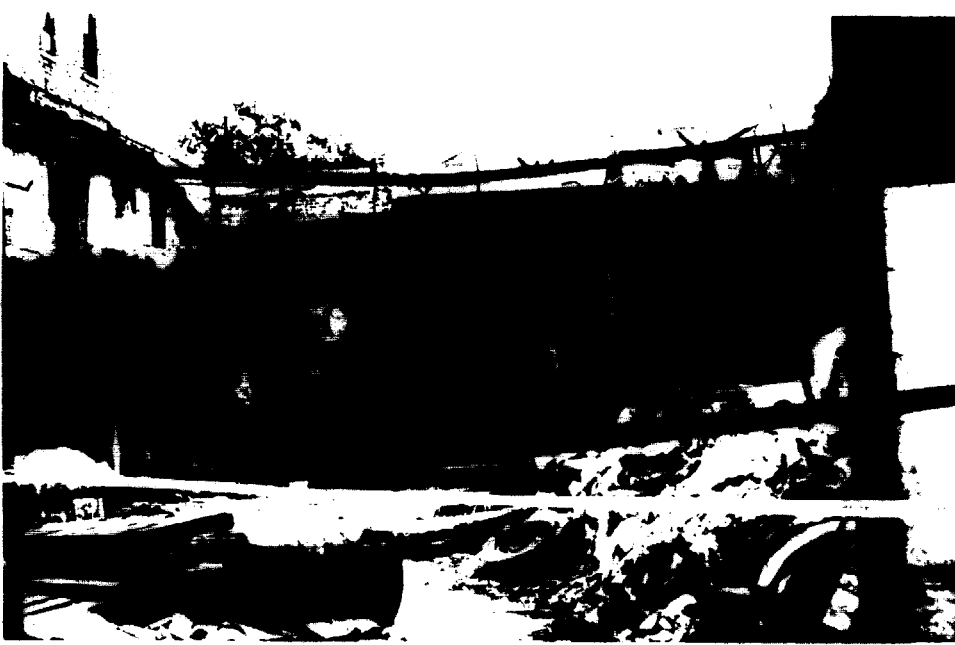
2. A view of the broken garage door and a deteriorated structure overhead. For this reason, TAT and the OSC did not go in on 6/4/86.



3. Looking in the burned out A-Chem facility to the west. Note drums stacked 3 high.



4. Looking along the north end of the building, note the debris in the foreground.



5. A more complete view of the burned-out A- Chemical facility looking north.



6. Site security looking north along N. Western Avenue. Note: Mrs. Josephine Zelek, owner of the tavern adjacent to the burned-out A- Chemical facility.



7. Looking west, two boarded windows on either side of the unboarded center window along the busy North Western Avenue.



8. Looking south along the back alley. Note: site security and the south garage in which the stolen cars were stored.

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Mr. Briand C. Wu, Acting Unit Chief
Emergency Response Section
Western Response Unit
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
11th Floor
230 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604

May 5, 1986

TAT-05-F-00828

Re: A-Chemical Factory Fire, Chicago, Illinois
TDD# 5-8601-11

Dear Mr. Wu:

On January 26, 1986, the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) was tasked by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to assist On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Briand Wu in responding to a fire at the A-Chemical Factory located at 1326 North Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois (Figure 1).

Subsequent to notification of the response at 1730 hours, TAT members Springer and Schultz prepared all necessary personnel protection, air monitoring, and sampling equipment. Upon arrival at 1900 hours, the TAT met with OSC Wu to gather information on site conditions.

The A-Chemical facility was observed from a distance and a site map was developed (Figure 2). The building was composed of two sections divided by a masonry wall. The western section was gutted by the fire and the eastern section was intact. Although the fire had been extinguished by the Chicago Fire Department, debris within the building continued to smolder.

At 2115 hours, TAT members Springer and Schultz and OSC Wu donned Level B protection and proceeded to conduct perimeter monitoring with a combustible gas indicator (CGI), HCN monitox unit, and photoionization detector (PID). As no readings above background were detected, the TAT entered the eastern portion of the building while continuing to conduct air monitoring.

The area in the eastern section contained drummed material labeled as sodium cyanide, dichromic acid, phosphoric acid, muriel cyanide, sodium benzoate, and sodium bicarbonate.

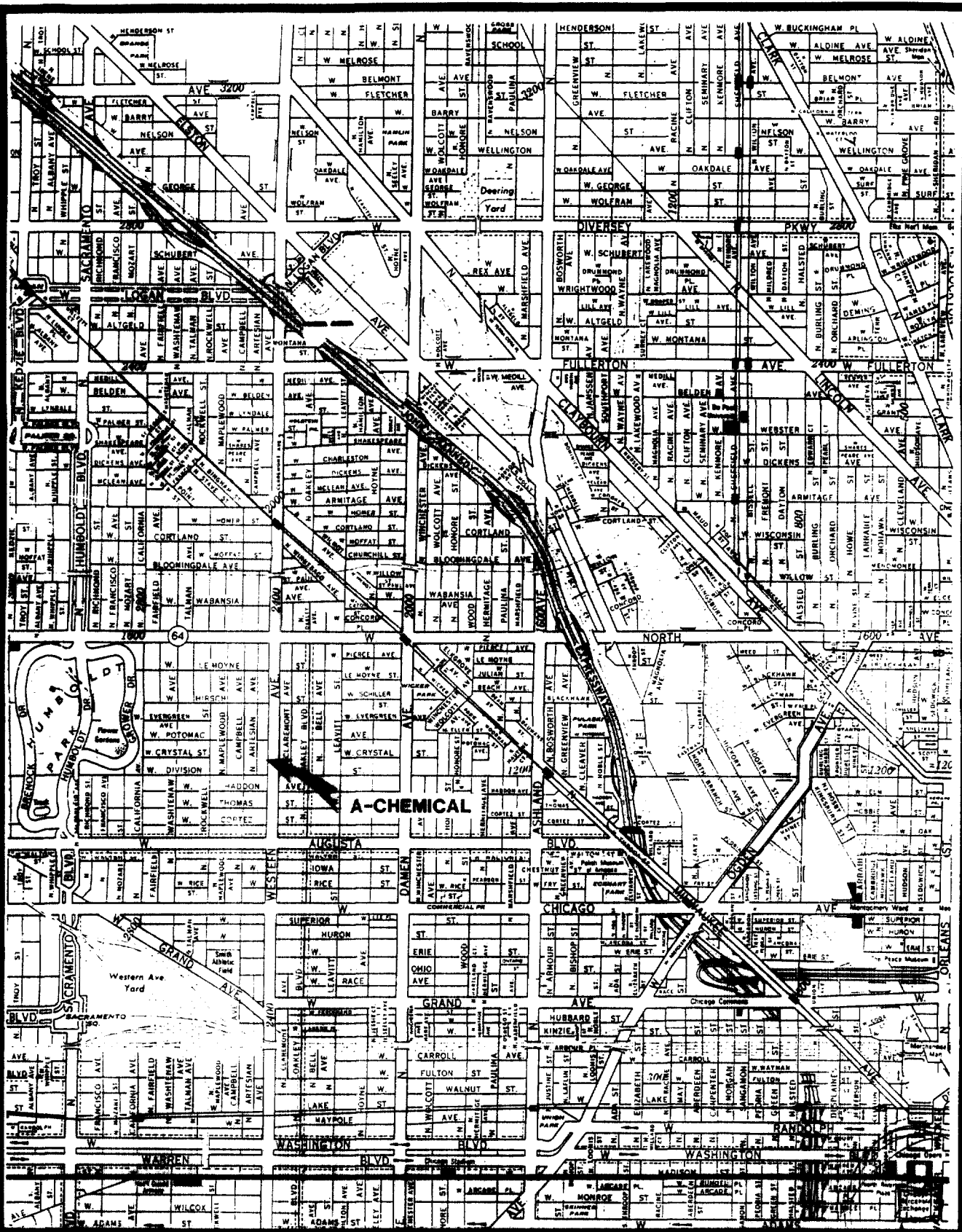


FIGURE 1
SITE LOCATION MAP
A-CHEMICAL FACTORY FIRE
CHICAGO, IL

SCALE: 1"=0.3MI.



WESTON
 CONSULTANTS

MAP ADAPTED FROM AAA

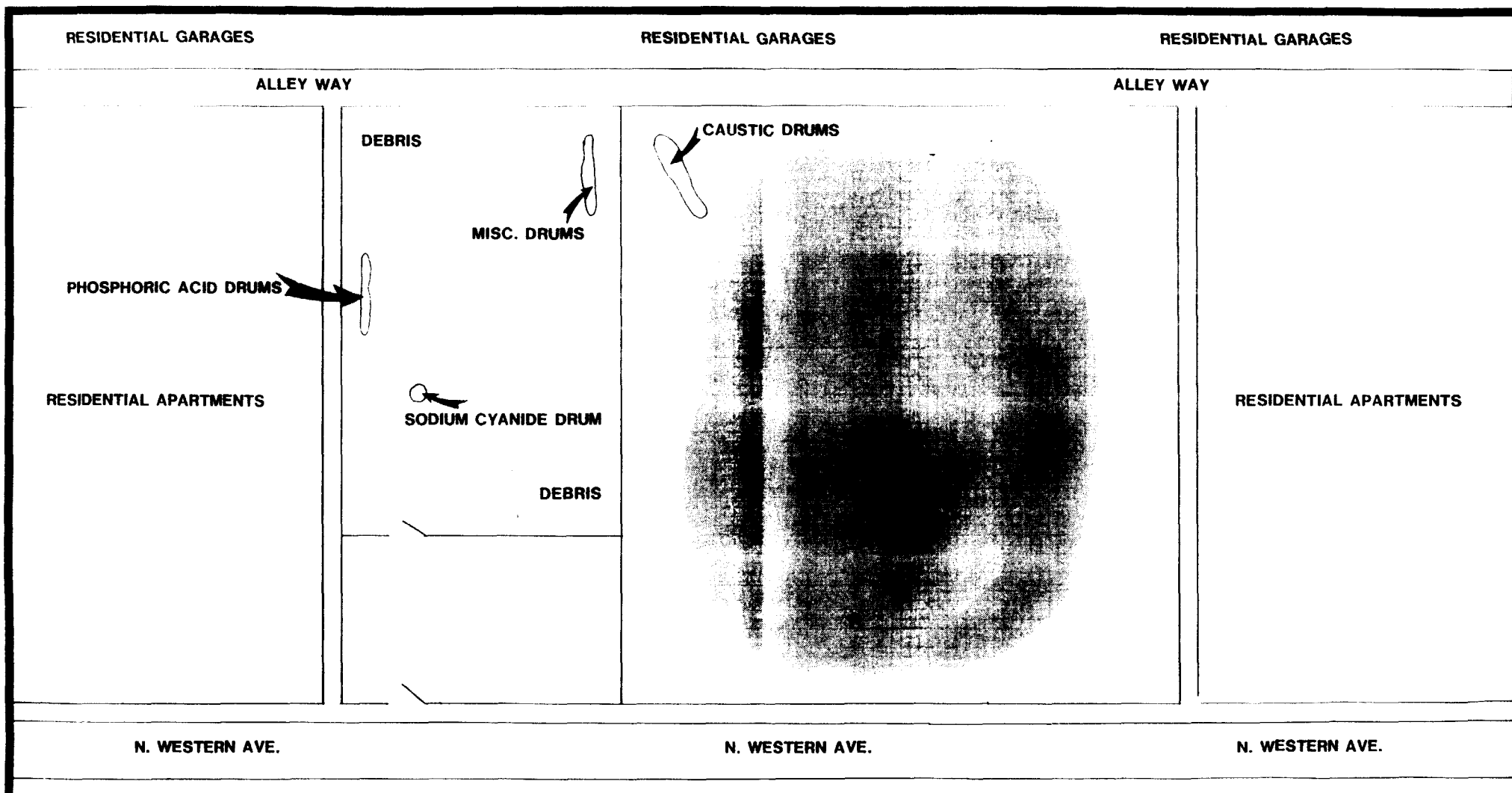


FIGURE 2
SITE MAP
A-CHEMICAL FACTORY FIRE
CHICAGO, IL

NO SCALE

Mr. Briand C. Wu

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May 5, 1986

Within the burned area, drums labeled caustic soda and hydroxide were observed. Also identified were gas cylinders that typically contain propane. No readings above background were detected within the building.

After exiting the building at 2130 hours, the OSC and the TAT prepared to depart the scene for the U.S. EPA Emergency Response Section offices. After consultation with Mr. Robert Bowden (Chief-Western Response Unit), it was determined that the only action to be taken that night was to acquire security for the site. The responsible party was also notified to board up the building to restrict access and to initiate mitigative actions.

On January 29, 1986, the TAT was tasked to assist OSC Stephen Browning in monitoring a Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)-funded removal of the contaminated run-off produced from extinguishing the fire.

The ERCS subcontractor, O.H. Materials, Findlay, Ohio, was contracted to remove all contaminated run-off and debris from the area surrounding the facility. They were also to decontaminate the area, and upon approval of the Metropolitan Sanitary District (MSD) of Chicago, discharge the run-off into the sanitary sewer system for subsequent treatment and disposal at the Chicago Metropolitan Sanitary District.

On January 30, 1986, TAT member Curt Michols met with OSC Browning, and Messrs. John Renkes and Steve Brigner of O.H. Materials at the A-Chemical facility. After a request from OSC Browning to the City of Chicago Consumer Services Department, a front-end loader and operator were secured from the Department of Streets and Sanitation. The loader was used to remove the contaminated snow and ice from in front of the facility, along the surrounding side streets, and in the alley behind the facility. The contaminated snow and ice were consolidated near two sewer heads, located just south of the facility. Approximately 200 feet of high-pressure hose was supplied by the Chicago Fire Department Hazardous Materials Team to aid in melting the snow and ice and subsequent discharge into the sewer system. Due to darkness and falling temperatures, work was stopped until the following morning. On January 31, 1986, all of the contaminated snow and ice that had previously been collected was melted and discharged into the sewer system. On February 1, 1986, the sidewalk in front of the building, the alley behind the building, and the

Mr. Briand C. Wu


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May 5, 1986

side streets were washed using the high pressure hose. A "supersucker" vacuum truck was used to assist in the removal of the contaminated snow, ice, and run-off from behind the facility. Its contents, along with the additional wash water, were then discharged into the sanitary sewer system. All cleanup equipment and personnel were demobilized February 1 following the final rinse. The TAT maintained all CERCLA documentation which has subsequently been forwarded to the OSC. If you should require any further information or have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Very truly yours,

ROY F. WESTON, INC.

Curtis R. Michols
Environmental ScientistScott D. Springer
Technical Assistance Team
Leader, Region V

CRM:amp

cc: B. Wu
S. Browning